

A Fulfilled Christian Life, Part 8 - Romans 12:12 – January 27th, 2013

- Today's teaching will be part eight of a series titled; "A Fulfilled Christian Life."
- Commencing in verse nine, Paul lists what could arguably be deemed as random afterthoughts, consisting of numerous short sentences.
- However, upon a closer examination, one realizes that there is a congruent component in how they all tie together in practical practice.

Charles Spurgeon - "Paul writes at full length upon the doctrines, but he is very concise and pithy upon the precepts, for things of daily practice need to be short and easy of remembrance. Let us learn each one of these weighty sentences by heart and put them all in practice."

- Suffice it to say, such is the case with this weighty verse that's before us today, in that it is packed full of practical application to our lives.
- So much so, that this one verse can have the propensity to single handedly be a game changer, such that it can literally change my life.
- Not only can my life be changed, my life can be fulfilled and joy filled, and it's evidenced by the first one in the first part of verse twelve.

1. Joy in Hope (Verse 12a)

(12a) Be joyful in hope...

- Paul writes that we are to be joyful in hope, in the sense that joy is the glue that keeps hope together. Lose your joy, and you lose hope.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest that what Paul is saying is if we lose the joy of our salvation, we also lose the hope of our redemption.
- This begs the question of what it is that would cause us to lose our joy in the first place. I believe it may be that the Lord hasn't returned yet.

Proverbs 13:12 NIV Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

- In other words, in longing for the Lord to return, and because it's going to be even longer before the Lord will return, we lose joy and hope.
- What comes vis-à-vis the absence of joy and hope is a groaning and longing, even an aching to be redeemed from this evil and sick world.
- I find it interesting that there's a striking parallel between what Paul writes here in Romans 12:12, and what he wrote in Romans 8:22-27.

Romans 8:22-27 NIV We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. (23) Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (24) For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? (25) But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. (26) In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. (27) And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

- The reason that I'm connecting these two scriptures is because verses 22-23 are about a longing for Jesus to come, being joyful in hope.
- Verses 24-25 are about waiting for Jesus to come, which is what we'll see next in the second part of verse twelve, being patient in affliction.
- Verses 26-27 are about praying for Jesus to come, which is what we'll see last in the last part of verse twelve, in our being faithful in prayer.

- At the risk of an oversimplification, if joyful in hope longing for Jesus to come, so too will I be patient in affliction waiting for Jesus to come.
- Furthermore, proportionate to my patience in affliction waiting for Jesus to come, so too will I also be faithful in prayer for Jesus to come.
- Conversely, if I lose joy and hope, then I'm unable to be patient in affliction waiting for Jesus to come or faithful in prayer for Jesus to come.

- It's been said that man can only live a matter of days without food or water, but he's unable to live a matter of a few seconds without hope.
- Notice in the twenty-fourth verse of chapter eight that Paul says: "For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all."
- The reason I point this out is we're all prone to a crisis of faith, as faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen.

Several years ago researchers performed an experiment to see the effect of hope on those in hardship. Two sets of laboratory rats were placed in separate tubs of water. The researchers left one set in the water and found that within an hour they had all drowned. The other rats were periodically lifted out of the water and then returned. When that happened, the second set of rats swam for over 24 hours. Why? Not because they were given a rest, but because they suddenly had hope! Those rats somehow hoped if they could stay afloat just a little longer, someone would reach down and save them. If hope holds such power for unthinking rodents, how much greater should its effect be on our lives.

- As one so poignantly put it; for the believer, there are no hopeless situations there are only people who've grown hopeless about situations.
- If you really think about it, those rats were not in a hopeless situation, they had only become hopeless that situation, and as such, gave up.
- However, the other rats, in the same exact situation groaning and drowning, had hope because of they believed in what was yet to come.

2 Corinthians 5:1-5 NIV (1) Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. (2) Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, (3) because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. (4) For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. (5) Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

- That's why Paul says what he says about waiting patiently for that which is to come, namely, adoption and the redemption of our bodies.
- In a sense, Paul is painting a most beautiful portrait of hope on the canvass of our temporal life, with the colors to come in our eternal life.
- Here's the bottom line, the joy of what I have to look forward to in heaven, gives me the hope in whatever it is I'm going through on earth.